The University of Georgia
and
Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University
present

The 2025 UGA-Winship Cancer Research Summit

Georgia Center for Continuing Education
Athens, Georgia
Monday, April 21, 2025

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. — Hill Atrium
Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:30 a.m. - 9:35 a.m. — Masters Hall
Opening Remarks and Speaker Introductions
Eileen Kennedy, PhD, University of Georgia

9:35 a.m. - 9:55 a.m. — Masters Hall
Microfluidic Analysis of Migration and Mechanical Properties in Individual Tumor Cells
Yang Liu, PhD, University of Georgia

9:55 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. — Masters Hall
Investigating actionable mechanisms of resistance to immune checkpoint inhibitors in NSCLC
Jessica Konen, PhD, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

10:15 a.m. - 10:20 a.m. — Masters Hall
Speaker Introductions
Eugene Douglass, PhD, University of Georgia

10:20 a.m. - 10:40 a.m. — Masters Hall
Defining Disease Recurrence and Therapy-Resistance within the Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma Tumor Microenvironment
Yana Zavros, PhD, University of Georgia

10:40 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. — Masters Hall
Mechanistic studies of the TCR signaling regulator THEMIS
Tyler Beyett, PhD, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

11:00 a.m. - 11:10 a.m. — Hill Atrium
Morning Break

11:10 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Masters Hall
Keynote Introduction
Natarajan Kannan, PhD, University of Georgia

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Masters Hall
Keynote Presentation
Strategies to Overcome Immune Exclusion in Microsatellite Stable Colorectal Cancer
Robert Coffey, MD, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Dogwood Hall
Networking Lunch

1:15 p.m. - 1:20 p.m. Masters Hall
Speaker Introductions
Renee Read, PhD, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

1:20 p.m. - 1:40 p.m. Masters Hall
Hydroxalogs: Novel Bioisosteres for Cancer Therapeutic Discovery and Optimization
David Crich, D ès Sc, University of Georgia

1:40 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Masters Hall
Advances in Pediatric, Adolescent and Young Adult Hodgkin Lymphoma
Sharon Castellino, MD, MSc, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

2:00 p.m. - 2:05 p.m. Masters Hall
Speaker Introductions
Greg Lesinski, PhD, MPH, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

2:05 p.m. - 2:25 p.m. Masters Hall
Sulindac modulates the response of triple negative breast cancer to anti-PD-L1 immunotherapy
Bin Yi, PhD, University of Georgia

2:25 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. Masters Hall
Characterizing and mapping HER2 plasticity in breast cancer
Jennifer Spangle, PhD, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

2:45 p.m. - 2:50 p.m. Masters Hall
Closing Remarks
Greg Lesinski, PhD, MPH, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Pecan Tree Galleria
Poster Session and Reception

Yang Liu, PhD
University of Georgia

Yang Liu, PhD, centers his research around harnessing the capabilities of micro / nano-fluidic technologies to advance patient health outcomes. A pivotal aspect of his research program revolves around the development of microfluidic platforms with the purpose of revealing the intricate relationships between cellular phenotypes and molecular expressions at the single-cell level. This pursuit holds the potential to unveil novel insights into the fundamental mechanisms underlying cellular behavior and response.

Driven by a commitment to pushing the boundaries of knowledge, Dr. Liu's research endeavors exemplify the cutting-edge applications of microfluidic technologies in unraveling the mysteries of cellular and molecular biology. Dr. Liu earned his PhD from the University of Georgia.

Jessica Konen, PhD
Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

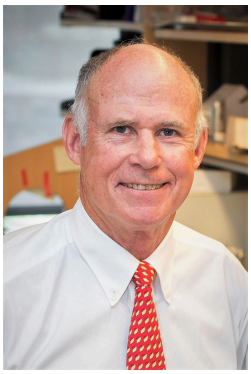
Jessica Konen, PhD, is currently an instructor in the Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology at Emory University School of Medicine. Dr. Konen earned her PhD from the Cancer Biology Program at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and she completed her postdoctoral training at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Dr. Konen's research focuses on revealing intrinsic and acquired resistance mechanisms to immunotherapy in lung cancer patients, with the goal of implementing rational drug combinations to improve immune checkpoint blockade efficacy.

Yana Zavros, PhD
University of Georgia

Yana Zavros, PhD, is professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences and serves as director of the inaugural University of Georgia's School of Medicine Research Center. As a translational scientist, she leads a multidisciplinary research team comprised of clinicians and scientists with expertise in surgical and medical treatments of pancreatic cancer, pathology and cell biology of the tumor microenvironment, organoid technology, and high-throughput data analysis. This team uses organoid models to investigate the interactions between tumor cells with the tumor microenvironment. By adopting a translational approach using organoids from individual patients diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer, the research team has used personalized drug screens to investigate individual responses and to identify combinations of anti-cancer drugs that were most effective for the individual patient. This impactful work has provided insights into cancer cell drug resistance, and it was leveraged to design a Phase II clinical trial that has already made an impact on the lives of patients with pancreatic cancer.

Tyler Beyett, PhD
Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

Tyler Beyett, PhD, received his doctorate in chemical biology from the University of Michigan and completed postdoctoral training with Dr. Michael Eck at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. His postdoctoral work focused on the clinical development of allosteric EGFR inhibitors for drug-resistant lung cancers. He joined Emory in 2023 as an assistant professor of pharmacology and chemical biology and a member of the Discovery and Developmental Therapeutics Program at Winship. His lab is currently focused on kinase inhibitor discovery and the development of chemical probes for regulators of T cell signaling and development.



Robert Coffey, MD
Keynote Speaker
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Robert Coffey, MD, is a physician-scientist whose work extends from basic cell biology to clinical investigation. A main focus of his research is the role of the EGF receptor (EGFR) and its ligands in GI neoplasia with a special emphasis on colorectal cancer (CRC). The lab discovered the EGFR negative regulator, Lrig1, marks colonic stem cells and acts as a tumor suppressor in vivo. The lab also described a new mode of EGFR ligand signaling via exosomes and recently identified a new secreted nanoparticle, termed a supermere. He directed the GI Cancer Program within the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (VICC) for over 20 years before stepping down in 2013 to focus on the VICC NCI-funded GI Special Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) and the Vanderbilt Epithelial Biology Center, which he co-directs. Dr. Coffey is PI of the VICC SPORE, which focuses on CRC and has been funded since 2002. Dr. Coffey is also contact PI of Vanderbilt's NCI-funded Human Tumor Atlas Network award that has resulted in the finding that sessile serrated lesions arise from gastric metaplasia in Cell in 2021 and the identification of a 4-gene immune-exclusion signature in microsatellite CRC in Cell in 2023. With training in medical oncology and gastroenterology, he has a unique perspective on the basic biology and translational opportunities in CRC. Dr. Coffey is professor in the Departments of Medicine and Cell & Developmental Biology, the John B. Wallace Professor of Medicine, and an Ingram Professor of Cancer Research. Dr. Coffey is a member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation, American Association of Physicians, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as a recipient of an NCI Outstanding Investigator Award.

David Crich, D ès Sc
University of Georgia

David Crich, D ès Sc, is the David Chu and Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Drug Design in the Departments of Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Science, and Chemistry, and the Complex Carbohydrate Research Center at the University of Georgia. His current interests span carbohydrate chemistry, medicinal chemistry, and synthetic organic chemistry. He is cofounder of Juvabis AG, a Swiss biotech start-up focused on the development of next generation aminoglycoside antibiotics. He has published more than 400 papers and has received numerous awards including the Tate and Lyle, Corday Morgan, and Haworth Medals from the Royal Society of Chemistry, fellowships from the AP Sloan Foundation and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Wolfram, AC Cope, Hudson, and James Flack Norris Awards from the American Chemical Society, the Emil Fischer Award from the European Carbohydrate Society, and the Whistler Award of the International Carbohydrate Society.

Sharon Castellino, MD, MSc
Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

Sharon Castellino MD, MSc is professor of pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine and director of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Program at the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center in the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta where she holds the Mark R. Hudgens Chair for Clinical Research. She is the founder and co-leader of the leukemia and lymphoma biorepository and vice-chair for the pediatric oncology precision medicine protocol at Children's and a member of the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Program of Winship Cancer Institute.

Nationally, Dr. Castellino serves as the scientific chair for the Children's Oncology Group (COG) Hodgkin Lymphoma Committee. Her expertise is in the study of outcomes and late effects in patients with hematologic malignancies and in design of clinical trials in pediatric oncology. Her work across clinical trials, outcomes and health services research and has always included a focus in examining disparities in cancer outcomes by race, ethnicity and age. In the discipline of survivorship, Dr. Castellino has also had active roles in the COG Survivorship Guidelines committee.

Bin Yi, PhD
University of Georgia

Bin Yi, PhD, is an associate research scientist at the University of Georgia's College of Pharmacy, Department of Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences. Currently, he serves as a graduate program faculty member at the University of Georgia, contributing to the academic and professional development of students in the pharmaceutical sciences.

Dr. Yi's research focuses on three main areas: 1. Developing novel therapeutic strategies for colon and breast cancer, both in vitro and in vivo. 2. Identifying and characterizing novel molecules in the tumor microenvironment that influence cancer progression. 3. Studying exosomal miRNAs and their role in cancer metastasis.

In addition to his research, Dr. Yi is dedicated to teaching and mentoring students at various academic levels, guiding them through research projects and scientific presentations. He also plays a vital role in departmental service, participating in numerous committees and review panels. Dr. Yi's commitment to advancing cancer research and education makes him a valuable asset to the scientific community.

Jennifer Spangle, PhD
Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

Jennifer Spangle, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Emory University School of Medicine. Her research program focuses on epigenetic contributions to cancer development and therapeutic response in breast and other cancers. Dr. Spangle's research is currently funded by the NCI, NIGMS, and the National Science Foundation.